(d) and (e) The Government has accorded the highest priority to the control and stabilisation of prices of essential commodities. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential goods, imports of items which are in short supply like pulses and onions have been placed under DGL at zero percent import duty and duty on the import of edible oils has been reduced to 15 per cent from 25 percent in order to augment the total availability of these items. Export of onions and pulses has been banned. Some of the essential commodities like rice wheat, palmolein and kerosene are also supplied through the outlets of public distribution system at below market prices. Stringent actions are being taken against hoarders, black marketeers and other indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act by the State/UT Governments.

Statement

Percentage variation in the wholesale Price Index Numbers for selected essential commodities for the last six months ending 14.11.98

Commodity	Percentage variation
Rice	12.2
Wheat	10.0
Gram	26.4
Arhar	46.8
Potatoes	85.9
Onion	218.5
Tea	2.1
Sugar	-0.4
Salt	0.7
Vanaspati	0.3
Mustard Oil	32.3
Groundnut Oil	11.6

Grievances of oil Mill Owners

675. SHRIMATI URMILABAN CHIMANBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state;

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "oil in "The .Sunday Times" (Ahmedabad edition) dated 8fh November, 1998;

(b) if so, the details and facts thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to sort out the grievances of the Oil mill owners?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Oil millers in Saurashtra had protested against alleged restrictions placed by the Gujarat State Government on movement of groundnut, groundnut oil, stock control and prices of groundnut oil.

The Association warned that oil millers would resort to forceful export of groundnut oil after that date. In case the State Government termed the action of oil millers illegal, the association would be forced to go to court. The Association stated that if even after this, the Government adopted delaying tactics in the court, the oil millers would have no option but to declare a lockout in the mills.

The Gujarat Government has reported that under an Order issued on 31.3.1998 under the Gujarat Essential Articles (Licensing Control and Stock Declaration) Order, 1981, any sale[1] or movement of edible oils of teilseeds outside the State had to be intimated to the District Collector forty-eight hours in advance.

(c) The State Government held regular meetings with the oil millers/dealers Associations. Inspections were intensified to detect and curb malpractices. Every effort was made to detect tax evasion, as also to bring down the rapidly increasing prices to a reasonable level. A Committee of seven Ministers has been constituted on 14.11.1998 to discuss and resolve important, as well as suddenly emerging, issues of essential commodities.

कम उत्पादन के बावजूद प्याज का निर्यात

676. **श्री बलवन्त सिंह रामूवालिया**:

श्री बरजिन्दर सिंह:

क्या खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामले मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि: